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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Santa Barbara, California)

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have signed an Executive Order which establishes the Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office. This office will administer the distribution of humanitarian assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance as provided for in the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985 and the Supplemental Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 1985.

The democratic resistance in Nicaragua was born and has grown in response to the steady consolidation of a totalitarian and interventionist Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua since 1979. Most of the members of the armed and unarmed opposition supported the overthrow of General Anastasio Somoza and expected that a democratic, pluralist government would follow. Very quickly, however, it became clear that the Sandinistas intended to make Nicaragua a one-party state. There would be no room for those who opposed the Sandinistas or who sought through democratic elections to challenge the Sandinistas' right to absolute rule. There would be collaboration with Cuba and the Soviet bloc in assisting revolutionary groups seeking to subvert and overthrow the democratic governments of neighboring countries. The good will that had existed between the Sandinista Front and the Nicaraguan people who had welcomed the new government soon began to crumble. Prominent leaders who served in the government after the revolution and who had led the opposition to Somoza fled the country and broke publicly with the Sandinista regime. By 1982, significant numbers of Nicaraguans were compelled to pursue the last resort for civil resistance of bearing arms against the government because there was no other choice. Their numbers have grown steadily. In recent months, with the resistance forces desperately short of weapons, ammunition, food, and supplies, volunteers kept coming. The resistance could not even provide boots, but people from all walks of life left their homes to join the cause. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have gone to refugee camps in Costa Rica and Honduras rather than continue to live under the Sandinistas. Many of these people are poor, simple peasants, the very people the Sandinistas claim to be helping. Yet under the Sandinistas they lost too much. They lost their individuality, they lost their freedom, they lost the opportunity to control their own destiny.

The \$27 million appropriated by the Congress for humanitarian assistance to the democratic resistance recognizes the serious nature of the conflict in Nicaragua and the need for